WHEN THE BLIND LED THE BLIND

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"WHEN THE BLIND LED THE BLIND"—A "LIGHTHOUSE" INCIDENT

THREE TIMES the little nurse had tried to secure an interview with the Lighthouse Keeper for a blind man whom she had watched over ever since he had lost his eyes and his right arm. There seemed many of these blind and maimed sufferers in the experience of Winifred Holt, an American girl, leader of a movement for the care and education of the blind, of which several "Lighthouses" here and in Europe are the outward symbols. Miss Holt tells many "true stories of heroic blind men and women," in a book which she has just published, called "The Light Which Can Not Fail" (Dutton). Of this particular man, who had not only lost his eyes, but his right arm, and all hope and interest in life also, she writes:

I was in the Lamp Room when the blind man entered, flanked on either side by an *infirmière*. The three sat down, facing me, and the two nurses began talking simultaneously in high-keyed voices. They spoke of the soldier as if he were not present. "He is discouraged. He will do nothing. He does not wish to live. Will you help us?"

Between the two shrill-voiced women sat the blind man. He was about twenty, with thick black hair which curled at the ends, and broad shoulders drooping pitifully toward the stump where the right arm had been, as if the whole body had lost its balance for lack of the limb blown off. The face was badly scarred, and the eyelids, red and disfigured, failed to cover completely the empty eye-sockets. The whole personality of the soldier breathed revolt, and dogged indifference to anything else.

The women continued to talk, and as I looked at the helpless man before me, I became almost hypnotized by their reiterated foolish remarks and the soldier's mutilated eyes, which gave me a weird feeling, as if the poor man were somehow looking at me and asking for help.

I sent for the Director and suggested that he take the ladies for a walk in the garden and a thorough inspection of the Lighthouse. Left alone with my blind soldier, I turned to my task. To my questions he would only answer: "*Je ne veux pas.*" I tried the usual ways of interesting the newly blind with games. All my attempts only made him restless and irritated him the more. But there was a sudden change when I handed him a flower. His nervous fingers merely clutched the stem and he said with a smile, "This is a pink. You see I was a florist." His quickness of recognition was almost uncanny. I handed him statuettes and other objects. He barely touched each, and with electric swiftness told me what was before him. Despite his suffering he was full of life, quick to perceive and recognize whatever met his fingers. I tried again to penetrate his reserve.

"What is it? Tell me honestly, my friend? I am used to sorrow." "I do not want to live." "Is it your eyes?" I queried. "No." "Your arm?" "No." "Then, it is a woman. Tell me all about her." "Well, you see, of course, as I am, I could not marry and I won't live. There's no use. I hate life. I hate myself. I loathe everything!"

It would be difficult to tell how we became friends, but we did, and quickly. Still, he remained in despair. All my devices had failed. Suddenly, I bethought me of another man who had lost his eyes, his right arm, and everything he cared for in life—the counterpart of this poor newcomer. We had found him in a revolt and despondency which seemed hopeless. "He is in the Lighthouse now," I thought, "taking a lesson. I will get him to help." I told my visitor I wanted to introduce him to one of my friends.

This other one-armed blind man, confided to me by a French doctor, had been in the Lighthouse but a short time, and only during the last few weeks had found his own balance. It was a great risk to hand over my task to such a substitute. But a man's future was at stake, and I must take the risk. I went out and found the blind pupil. Telling him briefly the story of the miserable boy in the Lamp Room, I asked him if he could help.

Holding himself very erect, with a cane in his articulated false arm, the blind man who had found light met the blind comrade who still sat in darkness. They groped to find each other, and I put their poor remaining hands together.

The happy blind man said cheerfully: "You see, it is curious, but we are in exactly the same predicament. I have lost what you have lost, and at one time I was as unhappy as you probably are now. I didn't want to live, and it was three whole months before I could learn to read. But now I never go to bed without reading a few pages. It is good. It gives you something to think about. I have just come from my commercial course, which is tremendously interesting."

Officially, I had left the room, but, unofficially, I felt it my duty, considering the dangerous equilibrium of the two men, to supervise their interview. It was a revelation of the strength and tact of our blind pupil. He quickly met the newcomer in argument at every point, and won. At last he came to the heart of the matter.

"May I venture to ask whether you are married?" "No," was the sullen answer. "Engaged, perhaps?" "No," fiercely. "Well, I was," said the pupil-teacher, "but I refused to marry the woman I loved when I found what a handicap I should be to her. She remained faithful, but I was firm. But, now that I have begun to find the light, I feel that I have a career before me, and I am confident that before long I shall be in a position to marry. We blind men need to be married. We require more than other people a friend who is interested in our future, and who will help us in our career, a real friend and a counsellor."

Then very deftly, like a skilled statistician, he drew up a census of the probable proportion of men and women in each community after the war. "For, example," he said, "I live in a small village. There are nineteen young girls there, and, if all goes well, after the war there will be two marriageable men. I am counted in this number. Did you ever hear of a woman who did not wish to marry?" "No," said the other. "Well, is there anything to be ashamed of in our wounds, if we do the best we can to reeducate ourselves and to become efficient?" "I suppose not," was the sullen answer. "Very well, then; hurry and learn to be self-helpful. You will find, so great is the heart of woman, that you will not be a drug on the market."

The listener had sat with his huge shoulders crouching forward disconsolately. As the bright prospects of matrimony were opened up by his companion, he slowly straightened himself. At the end he sat erect, young, calm, almost confident.

"Have I made everything clear to you?" said the other blind man. "It is not impossible to look facts in the face. Now I should very much like to show you my writing-machine. Will you come with me and look at it?" "Yes, I should like to see it," said the other. "It is convenient," continued his mentor, "for blind people always to be supervised. My typewriter permits me to write directly to my friends. I direct and seal my envelops, and then, in a casual fashion, ask any one to read the address. They do not know who has written the letter. They may think I am posting a letter for a comrade. But I learn whether I have written the address correctly and make sure that my letter will reach its destination."

"A splendid idea," said the new pupil. Listening carefully, I detected a note of hope in his voice, and began to fancy the composition of a *billet-doux* to the lost fiancée when the ex-fiancé should have mastered his typewriter with the fingers of his left hand.

Both blind men rose. The teacher-pupil is now doing important, self-supporting work. He has made several admirable inventions in tools and machinery of service to the blind, has learned to speak English and Spanish, which, as it is the language of love, he will probably use with his new wife.

The one-armed blind florist was last seen cheerfully knitting and earning money zealously by his quick machine. He worked with such enthusiasm that evidently the truant fiancée has smiled again on her heroic suitor. I officially appeared. "Well, friends," I asked, "shall we go down and look at the machines?" "With pleasure!" said the new recruit for light.

"What have you done?" exclaimed the chattering nurses, returned from their tour of inspection.

"Nothing," I answered. "But our pupil has put your patient's feet on the path that will bring him to the light."

Paris, 1917.

There are nine of these "Lighthouses" now in operation in various parts of the world, we are told in an appendix to Miss Holt's book, beginning with "Lighthouse Number 1" (The New York State Association for the Blind), which was opened by ex-President Taft in New York. "A Handbook for the Blind and Their Friends" is included in Miss Holt's large new volume, much of it pointing the moral brought out by her story, quoted above, of the man who was blind and maimed. Preparation for blindness, if the loss of sight is seen to be inevitable, is part of the work done in these Lighthouses. Miss Holt includes two brief and significant incidents from "Lighthouse Number 1," in New York City:

A blind writer came to Lighthouse Number 1. His eyes looked normal. "I have come to help and to be helped," he said, "I shall be blind before the year is out. Please teach me how to be blind before the curtain falls." We did, and he is now, tho totally blind, in charge of a Lighthouse.

A woman, to make ready for her oncoming blindness, bound her eyes and went about her household duties, so that when she could no longer see, she was still able to carry on her usual life much as before.

WINTER · TRAVEL · AND · PLAYGROUNDS

THE QUEST OF WINTER EASE

AS MAN LATELY IMITATED THE BIRDS in his ambition to travel through the air, so in an earlier day he patterned himself after them, we are told, when he began to move southward in quest of winter ease. The birds first noticed the speedier retirement of the sun and the progressive shortening of the days long before the end of the year. They hopped higher in their dwelling-places among the trees to have more benefit of sun, but its light and heat were drawn away more and more day by day. Finally, they set out in pursuit of the sun and found its warmth and geniality anew in distant climes. For a long time, travel-talkers tell us, man merely rhapsodized about the waning year and wrote poetry to the fugitive songsters. Then some who cared nothing for poetry but liked facts and warm weather began to venture forth on the trail of the birds; and this it would appear, is the genesis of that great migration of people each year which has resulted in the establishment of winter colonies in all parts of the globe.

Cities have sprung up as if by magic in wildernesses and along barren shores that had been shunned for centuries by wary mariners. The ancient instinctive spirit of adventure and exploration was reenkindled among humanity, and the voyage and journey, at one time possible only to those of ample means, have become a possibility to the many of varying degrees of wealth and leisure. Some travel for rest and recuperation only, while others set forth with a kind of double purpose of business and enjoyment. Nor do they all move in the same direction toward lands where it is summer when the northern areas are wrapt in the snows of winter. Certain constitutions find winter ease not in the relaxation of warmer climates but in the more rugged tests of northern regions. But whether the movement is toward the north or toward the south, movement there is and it grows to greater numbers each successive year. But however high an increase appears in the migrating population of winter the multiplicity and variety of resorts at their disposal seems to keep even pace with it. In the following record from the latest and most authoritative sources of travel information will be found full proof of this assertion.

WINTER SPORTS IN THE NORTH

Just as European winter tourists frequent not only the warm shores of the Riviera but the snow-clad mountains of Switzerland, so in our own country winter recreation is divided between the tropics of Florida and the frosty Adirondacks, New England and Canada. To many hardy souls there is joy in the tang of frost-laden air; in the jingle of sleigh-bells; the glisten of snow-crystals. To these adherents of Jack Frost a day spent with snow-shoes, skiis, tobogganss or skates and followod by a roaring log-fire is the acme of mid-winter recreation. Mid-winter carnivals at Canadian cities are long established events, and now the winter sports at Lakes George and Saranac, hunting the Yule Log by members of the Lake Placid Club in the Adirondacks are fixtures, while in New England these sports are growing in favor each year. Denny B. Goode, Manager of the Tourist Bureau of Boston, writes us: "Just a dash of psychology, a bit of initiative and a good deal of common sense and human nature have suddenly transformed the New England winter that was cold, bleak and inhospitable into the most joyous season of the year. No longer is it a season to be dreaded but rather to be looked forward to with eager and pleasurable anticipation. . . . The New York Rotary Club has arranged for an outing next January for 200 of its members and their wives to resorts in the White Mountains. A similar carnival is planned by the Boston Rotary Club. The presidents and secretaries of the fifty-odd New England clubs and their families will enjoy an extra three-day winter outing at Claremont, New Hampshire. Many other New England clubs are planning such outings. The Boston Chamber of Commerce will repeat its four-day outing of last January in the White Mountains. . . . The Appalachian Mountain Club has arranged for five such excursions for its members, scattered throughout the winter, and in various sections of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Western Massachusetts. One hundred and ninety-six members of The Ark Builders of Boston were registered in last year's party, and more than 500 have applied for reservations Christmas week.

"More than sixty New England resort hotels kept open last season for winter business and this year they will number eighty-nine. Railroads cooperate by giving reduced rates for large-party movements. Hotels provide the necessary pungs and tobogganss, and usually skiis. Patrons usually provide their own snow-shoes and skates. Hockey equipment, curling and other ice paraphernalia, including huts and lines for ice-fishing in the lake region, are provided by the hotels. One of the spectacular events of last season was a dog-team race of 130 miles, negotiated in three days. Light-harness horse-racing on ice is another favorite pastime. Costume carnivals are popular."

One of the most popular winter resorts of New England is that of Poland Springs. Throngs of winter visitors gather here for winter sports particularly during the Yuletide season and the February holidays.

VACATIONS IN THE SOUTHLAND

For those who prefer either a moderate or tropical climate for their winter vacations there are innumerable resorts in the various regions of the South. Indeed, before we even enter the Southland there are Atlantic City with its sky-scraping hotels and incomparable Boardwalk; Lakewood in the Pine belt of New Jersey and Washington, that fascinating gateway to Southern playgrounds.

We have not far to go in the Southland before we encounter some of its varied treasures for the winter vacationist. An overnight steamer trip from Baltimore or from Washington down Chesapeake Bay brings us to the mouth of the historic James, of all Southern rivers perhaps the most interesting. An excellent picture of this historic river of Captain John Smith, Pocahontas, Rolfe, the ruins of ancient Jamestown and the stately mansions of Berkeley, Shirley, Westover, Brandon and others is given by Frank and Cortelle Hutchins in their volume entitled "Housebloating on a Colonial Waterway" (L. C. Page & Company), "—that Nestor of American rivers! When is the James to find its rightful place in American song and story? Our oldest Colonial waterway—upon whose banks the foundations of our country were laid, along whose shores our earliest homes and homesites can be still pointed out—and yet almost without a place in our literature. Other rivers, historically lesser rivers, have had their stories told again and again, their beauties lauded and their praises sung. But this great pioneer waterway, fit theme for an ode, is to-day our unsung river."

Richmond on the falls of the James is certain to appeal to the tourist. "The charm of Richmond is cumulative," says John T. Faris, author of "Seeing the Sunny South" (J. B. Lippincott Co.). "To see it once is to admire it; to see it a second time is to rejoice in it; to see it a third time is to love it."

In the heart of the Valley of Virginia on the Norfolk & Western System are those subterranean wonders, the Luray Caverns, containing three miles of glittering and varicolored stalactites and stalagmites in amazing variety of formation. Other wonderful caverns in this region are worthy of inspection, notable among them the Shenandoah Grottoes, midway between Mt. Jackson and New Market on the New York to Atlanta Highway and Harrisonburg Branch of the Southern Railway System.

Another scenic wonder in the Shenandoah Valley, one famous since it was visited by George Washington and purchased by Thomas Jefferson, is the Natural Bridge, a rocky span of ninety feet, two hundred and fifteen feet high. Jefferson styled it "the most sublime of Nature's Works," and generations of tourists have journeyed across mountain and through valley to see it. This region now included in the Natural Bridge